



CANNABIS

Now a multi-billion-dollar industry, the federal government's archaic prohibition of cannabis continues to cause confusion, uncertainty, and harm for state and Tribal governments, small businesses, medical providers, veterans, and communities most impacted by the failed war on drugs.

A FIERCE ADVOCATE IN CONGRESS AND BEYOND

Earl became involved in marijuana reform as a State Legislator when Oregon became the first state to decriminalize cannabis in 1973. Cannabis was illegal everywhere and public opinion was not favorable. But as part of this effort to reevaluate public policy, the weight of evidence suggested that criminal penalties were not effective in changing behavior and were decidedly unfair. Penalizing people made no sense. This came to a head with legislation advanced in that 1973 legislative session. From that moment on, Earl became an outspoken supporter for legalization, not just decriminalization. Since coming to Congress in 1996, no other elected official has done more to end the failed federal prohibition of cannabis and move forward rationale federal cannabis policy.

In 2012 Congressman Earl Blumenauer formed an alliance with Congressman Jared Polis and began hosting meetings for congressional staff and advocates to talk about the need for sensible federal marijuana policy. This group became even more important with the emergence of state level decriminalization in Washington, Colorado, and Oregon. Earl authored a major report on cannabis, "The Path Forward: Rethinking Federal Marijuana Policy" that served to build a base of bipartisan support in Congress. This was the beginning of the Marijuana Working Group, which by 2017 became the Congressional Cannabis Caucus. Earl recruited Representatives Polis (D-CO), Young (R-AK), and Rohrabacher (R-CA) to establish the Caucus as a bipartisan forum for members to engage, discuss, and learn about the need to establish a more rational approach to federal cannabis policy.

Earl's early legislative successes span from House passage of the Veterans Equal Access Amendment to end the Department of Veteran Affairs prohibition on providers helping veterans access state-legal medical cannabis to being involved with every state initiative that sought to decriminalize cannabis. The 116th Congress was the most transformative for cannabis policy to date. One of the major legislative wins early in the 116th Congress was the passage of the SAFE Banking Act, to allow state-legal cannabis businesses and ancillary businesses access to access to standard financial and banking services. This legislation has since passed the House on seven separate occasions. The House also passed the MORE Act, which remains the first and only comprehensive cannabis reform to pass either chamber of Congress. The legislation would federally decriminalize marijuana, normalize federal marijuana regulation, and invest in communities targeted by the disproportionate and discriminatory war on drugs.



Congressman Earl Blumenauer ■ Third District of Oregon

In the 117th Congress, Earl's Medical Marijuana and Cannabidiol Research Expansion Act to ease research restrictions on cannabis was enacted into law. It the first federal standalone cannabis reform to be enacted into law.

The same year, Earl applauded President Biden's announcement to pardon all federal simple marijuana possession convictions and begin the administrative review of the scheduling of marijuana. He has repeatedly urged President Biden to deschedule cannabis completely, noting that if cannabis was scheduled out of stigma, not science.

THE PATH FORWARD

Earl continues to tirelessly build a broad, bipartisan coalition in support of rationale, restorative federal cannabis policy. In the 118th Congress, he has reintroduced the SAFE Banking Act, the Veterans Equal Access Act, and the MORE Act. Earl also continues to lead efforts to urge the Biden-Harris Administration to deschedule cannabis and embrace full cannabis legalization.

After 50 years of working to end the failed war on drugs, this progress remains a source of tremendous satisfaction. The ultimate goal of legalization is so close within reach.